

# Newman Rebuts 'Apache' Bias Charge

By RICHARD F. SHEPARD

**H**IGH on a rocky knoll of the South Bronx, Paul Newman held a news conference yesterday and spoke of issues that have arisen about the film being made there, "Fort Apache, the Bronx."

Mr. Newman, who is star of the \$14 million motion picture, convened the brief, stand-up conference to discuss charges that the film is biased against Puerto Ricans, blacks and the South Bronx.

Just over a week ago, a group called Committee Against Fort Apache brought suit against the makers of the film and Mr. Newman on the ground that the film was unfair to minority groups and to the area. José Rivera, a member of the committee, said yesterday that the suit was a libel action and not a suit to stop the movie from being made. He described the committee as a coalition, an umbrella group of 10 Bronx organizations. The committee is being represented in its court action by William M. Kunstler. The suit is at present in New York State Supreme Court. The film is a Time-Life Films Production, with David Susskind as senior executive producer and Gill Champion as producers.

## Public Session Set Saturday

"It portrays our people totally as outcasts," said Mr. Rivera. "They are not going to show the cause of this situation."

Mr. Rivera, who said he was chairman of the land-use committee of the Bronx Community Planning Board 6, in the Tremont Avenue area, and also a member of the United Tremont Trades, one of the committee's constituent groups, said that, although the suit was not designed to stop the movie, action by the community would be directed to that end. He said that a public hearing would be held, with community and



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Paul Newman talks to reporters in the South Bronx, where he is making a film

other elected officials present at Lincoln Hospital at 11 A.M. Saturday.

The film tells the story of policemen in the area's 41st Precinct, a station-house that had been dubbed "Fort Apache" because of the rigors of police duty there. It has been in production in the Bronx for four weeks and has slightly more than that time yet to go before being readied for release around Christmas.

Mr. Newman, who said he was upset by reports he had read about the movie's social thrust, said: "It is not a racist picture. It is tough on Puerto Ricans, blacks and the neighborhood, but the two villains are Irish cops who throw a Puerto Rican off of a roof."

He said that the film was realistic, that the characters could not be "Puerto Rican doctors and bankers" because the police dealt with crime in the streets and the figures in the movie are involved in that. He observed that there was not a hospital or a high school in the 41st Precinct and wondered why people did not turn their attention to such problems, rather than opposing the film.

A few members of the Committee Against Fort Apache appeared in 167th Street after the news conference, which drew many television and other newsmen, and said that they could organize greater protest demonstrations if they could learn the shooting schedule. Residents of the neighborhood, which is mostly black, argued with Richard Perez, the public-relations representative of the committee. They seemed to regard the film with equanimity and did not share his indignation.

## Criticizes the Script

Mr. Perez said there was not one decent minority-group person in the script. He added that his parents and he lived in the area and that he did not want such a portrait drawn for younger generations. Another committee member distributed leaflets.

"You have people in this neighborhood who are good and hard-working," said Russell Brooks, who lives on a block adjoining the park. "Look around, you see the kids playing in the park and the people talking about the strike. Nobody likes a cop when they beat up people badly, but then when they need him, they ask, 'Where are the cops?' I don't know what the movie is about, so I can't say what I think of it."

Iola Edwards, another resident of the neighborhood, was pushing the 19-month-old daughter of a friend on a swing.

"I like having the movie here," she said. "It's very seldom anything happens up this way."

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